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A.NOLEN

Assaulting Mt. Helicon: Writing and Current Affairs.

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ADDICTION AND CONTROL

One of the fun things about blogging is to see how readers respond to my posts. Lately, there's been interest in my writing on narcissism with reference to the ongoing sex education/pedophile scandal around Benjamin Levin, Ontario's one-time deputy education minister, as well as the 2002 scandal around S&M aficionado and *completely unqualified* weapons inspector, Harvey "Jack" McGeorge.

McGeorge's and Levin's separate exposures are not isolated events; there are an awful lot of compromised people in influential positions. Remember the 2013 implosions around Tim Giardina, the "No 2 officer at the military command in charge of all US nuclear war-fighting forces" and Michael Carey, who was "in charge of US intercontinental nuclear missiles"? Giardina was fired for being a hopeless gambling addict, and two weeks later Carey lost his plum post for rampant alcohol abuse. Besides that type of sad story, there seems to be a never-ending parade of pedophiles around the BBC, US and UK governments.

It could be that these cases are just a very large number of unfortunate anomalies, however the sheer quantity of them suggests to me *it's possible* that people with exploitable weaknesses are sought out for positions of influence. I'll also point out just how rare some of these weaknesses are: alcohol dependence affects somewhere between 1.7-3.7% of the general population; gambling disorders affect something like 1% of the population; and pedophiles are something below 4%.

I've already written about why I suspect narcissists are recruited for the military and intelligence communities– their insecurities make them extraordinarily reliable for their controllers. I have no reason to believe that the compromised people involved in all of the cases I mentioned above are unusually 'narcissistic', however they all have shown behaviors which *suggest* addiction problems.

My question for this post is: Are people who suffer from addictions unusually controllable, like people who suffer from excessive narcissism? I'm going to try to answer that by looking at my own experiences and then by looking at what mental health professionals call "co-dependence".

As I've stated in other posts: I've never worked for the US military nor the 'intelligence community', but I have worked alongside them and I've fraternized with them. So all of my observations in this post come from my various personal experiences, which I've no way of proving are representative of these communities as a whole, although *I suspect* that my experiences are not unique.

The military and intelligence communities are unusually tolerant of addiction *amongst their own members*. The 'get out of jail free' card is 'Post Traumatic Stress Disorder': much behavior is forgiven on the grounds that the individual is suffering from battle stress– which may be a perfectly humane and reasonable explanation of the bad behavior, but tends to ignore the fact that 1) the person may still be suffering from an addiction and 2) the addiction could have been in place well before any combat experiences.

What do I mean by 'tolerant'? I've seen veteran police officers excuse soldiers' 'buzzed' (i.e. drunk) driving on PTSD grounds on three separate occasions– three different drivers in three different states. Alcoholism is something that the 'IC' and military seem very willing to turn a blind eye to; there is a culture of heavy drinking in these communities which extends from the grunts all the way to the higher-ups. I've also seen an inexplicable number of professional 'second chances' given out as a result of self-destructive, addiction-related behavior.

Alcoholism isn't the only addiction which is given leeway by the military and 'IC': in my experience there is a pervasive culture in these institutions which considers casual sex 'macho' as long as it's kept away from 'the chain of command'. I'm told that quite a number of recruits join on the expectation that they'll have access to women they'd otherwise not have. Amongst the 'IC' agencies, it's not unheard of for 'office meetings' to be regularly held in strip clubs. Your tax dollars at work.

Sleeping around and haunting strip clubs by themselves are not the same thing as having a sex addiction, but an active sex addict would have more ease fitting in with these crowds than they would most. On the flip side, someone struggling with alcoholism would find it difficult to 'stay on the wagon' in these cultures.

(In the case of the sex addicts, it might be worth rememberi

the CIA's personality profiler, John Gittinger, was interested in people who are preoccupied with self-centered sex for control purposes and impersonal sex is a feature of some sex addictions. Readers may also be interested in my post about Kim Philby's views on homosexuality and how the military is particularly attractive to the LGBT community.)

But why would the military and intelligence communities be tolerant of *addiction* in this way? Surely these organizations have extra incentive to recognize that people with addictions are likely to have judgment problems.

I think one obvious answer is that some of these people are promoted because their addictions would be career-killers if they ever became public– a sort of built-in fail-safe should the individual ever become unreliable. However, as anybody who has ever managed people knows, negative incentives aren't the best way to get cooperation from your employees, it's better to make them *want* to work for you. Is there something about the nature of addiction which could make the addict dependent on their patrons/employers?

Time for another anecdote: I was talking with a lifetime member of the military and 'intelligence community' about their job. They expressed a deep dissatisfaction about the things they were asked to do and the reasons they were asked to do them; the person expressed a great deal of pain and disillusionment in this regard. I suggested that it was time to move to the private sector, where their skill set would probably even earn them more money. The individual turned inward at this suggestion, and flippantly said: "But then I'd have to work for a living."

There's an ugly side and a pathetic side to that flippant comment. First of all, it's true, many government employees sail through their careers with minimal effort– that's not just a military or 'IC' thing. However, the individual in question was also struggling with addiction issues which would not be tolerated in the private sector *to the extent* they are tolerated in the structured, sheltered world of the military– *and the individual knew that*. This individual had a relationship with their employer which you could describe as 'co-dependent': the individual did what was asked of them because their employer enabled their addiction(s).

'Co-dependent' is a psychiatric term that I've come to understand as 'a type of person who looks for relationships which help them avoid emotions that they are terrified of feeling'– emotions that would "annihilate" them. This means that co-dependent relationships are not love-based, but based on the need to cover up those scary feelings with:

- security (financial, physical, etc.)
- feeling of belonging, worthiness, specialness, 'secret team'
- enabling of addiction, or feeling that their addiction is 'okay'.

Besides better understood addictions such as those to drugs, alcohol and medications, "enabling of addiction" includes addictions to sex, power, gambling, pornography, overworking, overeating, spending, exercise/ 'cult of the body' addictions; or 'spiritual' addictions like miracle cures, 'personal empowerment' schemes, religious 'epiphanies', psychics, gurus, cults or other "emotions for sale". Co-dependent people want relationships that enable their addiction, or at least that 'don't judge' it.

Bearing 'co-dependence' in mind, I'd like to bring up the case of Tim Giardina and Micheal Carey again. Giardina spent an inordinate amount of time in casinos– something like 15 hours a week at the Horseshoe Casino in Council Bluffs, Iowa alone. (How many working a.nolen readers have the time to do that?!) He wasn't dropped from his highly sensitive position with the US nuclear arsenal until he was caught faking $500 chips; when this story broke in 2013 Giardina was still insisting that he didn't have a gambling problem.

Carey, previously a 'major general' in the US Air Force, blew his career by getting terribly drunk while on a sensitive mission to Russia, where he did some high-profile wenching and crashed the stage at a bar, 'La Cantina', during a musical act– despite being barely able to stand. This is how the Air Force describes it:

> *Maj Gen Carey consumed alcoholic beverages to the extent that it impacted his conduct during briefings, during the banquets, during the tour of the monastery, and on the walk to Red Square for dinner.*

Apparently, Carey's drinking began on the flight over to Moscow and continued the whole trip. Personally, if I drank continuously over a flight to Moscow, I'd never disembark. The sad fact is that Carey had been developing his alcohol tolerance over a long time.

Back in 2013 when the cringe-worthy Carey/Giardina details first came out, talking heads used the events to lambast military contractors: "See! The background checks weren't good enough!" I suspect these critics represent the 'lifetime spook' contingent who made hay out of Edward Snowden's contracting past. I also suspect that their criticisms are entirely insincere– key figures from the US nuclear arsenal are just as 'surveilled' as any member of the 'IC', and as Quinn Norton reminds us: "The IC are some of the most surveilled humans in history." I'm 100% confident in my assertion not because of the counterintelligence concerns surrounding the nuclear arsenal– counterintelligence has never been a high priority amongst US spooks— but because there's *no way* that the powers-that-be would risk putting men in Carey's or Giardina's positions who weren't reliable. They wouldn't want someone in charge of big bombs who might suddenly develop an opinion should an unpopular order come down the pipe. Those guys were watched very closely and their superiors– the men who got Carey and Giardina appointed– were entirely aware of the men's weaknesses, though I do accept that the official counterintelligence organs 'in charge' *may* not have been.

The long and short of it is that co-dependence keeps the co-dependent inside an unhealthy, self-destructive relationship. "I do this for them, they do this for me and we get along just fine." The problem is that there's nothing "just fine" if a codependent, say… *runs the US nuclear arsenal according to cue in exchange for support of his gambling addiction*. Imagine the dangers which that sort of arrangement entails, especially now that the DoD classes the Founding Fathers as "extremists".

Perhaps unsurprisingly, there's a lot of overlap between medical definitions of 'co-dependency', addiction and 'narcissism', the personality disorder I've identified as being useful to exploitative organizations. Tian Dayton, a clinical psychologist, offers this explanation:

> *A narcissist often prefers to have people around him who behave in such a way as to meet and gratify his own needs or enhance his own vision of himself. If they act separately, have too many of their own points of view or their own opinions they threaten the narcissist's equilibrium.*
>
> *How does this mirror addiction? The addict is ever absorbed with getting their next fix; that's how they maintain* their *equilibrium, albeit very dysfunctionally. Their needs come first.*
>
> *The narcissist also tends to be absorbed in themselves and in meeting their next need and rather unaware and even uncaring of the needs of those around them.*
>
> *Same with the addict: the needs of those around them have to come second to their meeting their own, often overpowering desire for their next "fix" whether it be a drink, drug, food or sexual encounter. Both the narcissist and the addict are first and foremost self absorbed. They come first.*
>
> *Addiction creates a kind of narcissism. It is constantly preoccupying; it takes a person over body, mind and soul.*

Unfortunately, the mental health profession doesn't seem to have a firm handle on 'personality disorders' and it's often unclear where one ends and the next one begins– I consider the 'cluster B' disorders a good example of this confusion. I believe the inter-relational problems I'm writing about today are as old as humanity and certainly predate more modern world-views like those of clinical psychology; I strongly suspect St. Augustine was talking about the same problems when he addressed the "bondage" of sin in *Confessions*. I will continue to use modern, medical labels for these behaviors in this post, though I doubt very much that they are internally consistent, i.e. where does an addict end and a narcissist begin?

According to Randi Kreger in an article for *Psychology Today*, substance abuse is prevalent amongst people who suffer from Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD):

> *People with NPD and BPD [Borderline Personality Disorder] use alcohol and other drugs at astounding rates to kill the pain. Of people with a diagnosis of NPD, during their lifetimes, 64.2% also have a substance abuse disorder (73.5% men; 50.5% women) and 51.1% have alcohol abuse or dependence.*

Joseph Burgo muddies the waters even more in an *Atlantic* article titled Where Narcissism Meets Addiction:

> *As Nathanson has noted, a struggle with profound shame lies at the heart of a broad range of addictive behaviors such as over-eating, alcoholism and sexual compulsivity.*
>
> *In other words, addictive behavior is a defense against unconscious shame.*
>
> *As I discussed in an earlier article for* The Atlantic *narcissism is another way to ward off unconscious shame – indeed,* narcissism is the primary defense against shame*.*

From what I've read, feelings of shame are what separate narcissists from 'psychopaths'– another slippery psychiatric label. *My understanding* of this is that a narcissist does feel shame, but they'll run from that feeling by off-loading the cause of the shame onto somebody else. Here's an example: if a more healthy man cheats on his wife, he'll feel shame for 1) having broken his oath, 2) being a poor example to his children, 3) letting down his wife. Hopefully, the negative shame-feeling will trigger introspection and prevent the behavior from happening again– personal growth.

According to the experts, this won't happen with a narcissist. The narcissist may attribute the shame-feeling to "enemies telling my wife about the affair" or may even turn the whole thing on its head and convince himself that it was really his wife who was cheating… anything to avoid that terrifying feeling of being bad, which once acknowledged 'must be' absolute and irreversible, the narcissist thinks. There's no room for personal growth in a narcissist's world, you're either perfect or a nothing.

If my understanding of what motivates a narcissist is correct, then to be a narcissist is to be backed into a corner by an engulfing fear, it's often described as an "annihilating" fear, and this type of fear is something that I'll probably never really understand. If the experts are correct and fear motivates narcissism, then I believe that anyone who takes serious steps to confront that fear and unlearn narcissistic behavior deserves a tremendous amount of respect.

So if narcissism has a lot of overlap with addiction, does it also have overlap with 'co-dependence'? This one is harder to pin down, apparently there is a relationship between co-dependence and narcissism, but there doesn't seem to be much academic work describing that relationship. My hunch is that the blogger from TheRawness has it pinned:

> *Although narcissists and codependents may seem like opposites on a superficial level, when viewing them from the outside, because they are both filled with toxic shame, they are far more similar than people suspect, in ways that aren't always obvious. As I've said in previous posts,* there is a little bit of codependence in every narcissist and a little bit of narcissism in every codependent.

To my mind, this echoes the relationship between the narcissistic cult leader and the narcissistic cult follower. I suspect that what shrinks call

"co-dependent", "addiction" and "narcissistic" are really just different views of the same self-defeating behavior. I think that St. Augustine might even be one step ahead of the head-doctors, in that he equates "sinful" choices with bondage and slavery, perhaps for reasons that the leaders of the "intelligence community" understand very well.

> *For of a forward will, was a lust made; and a lust served, became custom; and custom not resisted, became necessity. By which links, as it were, joined together (whence I called it a chain) a hard bondage held me enthralled. – St. Augustine, Confessions.*

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CONTACT

aDOTnolen[literally] (at) gmx (dot) com

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